281 Fats, usually of plant origin, either wild or domestic, are then used to lubricate and soften the skin. This is hard manual work, lasting sometimes several days. Most commonly preferred is the castor oil bean, called "qaçhma" or "gulqwas". The skin may now be kneaded or stamped by feet, to work the fats in and render the skin soft for the cutting and fashioning of objects, which now follows.

282 411 The shield was formerly one of the major products of the Faqi, but now is made rarely and only for ornamental use. The rhinoceros or buffalo skin is cut circular, placed over a wooden stake in the ground, the rim pegged down, to prepare the cupola shape. The skin is then depilated, dried, smeared with oils, to expand again. It is beaten to increase its resistance. Incised decorations and the pulling through of the leather handle, are done before the shield is entirely hard and dry. Metal decor is added later, by the smith, after the Faqi has delivered his product.

282 More common products, still made today, are: half-sack, "ənqälba", for carrying the baby on the mother's back, with straps and a bottom tied to the mother's shoulders, chest and waist; full sacks, "aqomada", for transporting grain to market, tied with strips (these are also used for various storage in the better Amhara huts); straps cut of poor skins in all kinds and sizes, "qeralla", some for tying loads onto donkeys, some to serve as more springy diagonal straps of the better "alga" bed; a fine, tanned cowskin used as blanket; "jändi", cover

[854] [415] [283]

565 In the past, the traditional desire for personal independence of the Amhara, particularly the Amhara noble, led him to prefer residence in his own province or district, where he could rule from the apex of local hierarchy. There he imitated the emperor as much as his means permitted.

565 Children of nobles imbibed the tremendous pride
854 of Amhara nobility from the time servants carried them about so that their noble feet would not be dirtied by walking, or else had their hands and feet washed by servants regularly. Boys, at about 7, would be given a private tutor, usually a young priest. At 10, when other boys are still in rags or at most wear tattered shorts, the young "balaw" (aristocrat) already was wearing full, white jodphurs.

565 In the provinces this pattern is still largely
178 unchanged. But with the increase in central government power, feudal nobles find it advisable to spend the greater part of the year in Addis Ababa--more than the emperor himself desires. Young nobles who graduate from the provincial elementary schools, where their Indian teachers deferred to them as much as their Amhara teachers, have a considerable adjustment to make when they enter High School in Addis Ababa, where the European instructors grade them on individual merit alone.

b) The Peasant Class.

565 In the peasant class there is a wide distinction between the landowning ("rest") peasants who are freemen

562 565 which happens among middle and upper feudal nobility--may herself become the founder ansponsor of a church. In this case she usually appoints a male administrator from among her kinsmen, or a local cheqa shum headman, to supervise the sharecropper gabbar supplying her church. She then would also exercise direct or indirect control over the qēs gobāz, the administrating priest.

585 A commoner or peasant woman is much more exposed to the inferior legal status of womwn. According to traditional law, the "semanya" bond with the formula of the oath "May the Emperor die" (e.g. Hayle Selassye 675 yemut"), is not legally valid, and her contractual function has to be performed through a male kinsman. Nevertheless, her legal position is by no means as 586 weak as that of the Muslim woman. The Amhara woman may take half of her husband's movable possessions upon divorce, i.e. thecows she brought into her marriage and half theincreade of any pooled property. To protect her somewhat from wilful mistreatment at the hands of her husband, a bride is given two male protective "best men", the "mizēn- but they are kinsmen of the bridegroom's!

Social inferiority of a commoner woman is also associated with her manual and menial labor, as hauler of water and hewer of wood or collector of cowdung.for fuel, and similar servant-like chores inside and outside the hut. The baby which she carries on her back 854 and breast-feeds for two years renders her physically dirty and often smelly. The commoner woman may not

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MPS Amhara MPS

561 PART XV : The Life Cycle of the Individual

Like many other societies with a tradition-directed culture, the individual passing through the age-grades of life is taught well in advance what his duties and privileges are at each stage.

The age-grades, though strongly emphasized in Amhara human relationships, are not as detailed nor as sharply divided from each other as in the case of the Galla of Southern Ethiopia (the "gada" age grades).

[554] The two-year breast-feeding period is the happiest of the stages for the baby. Infancy and childhood, for both sexes, are carefree periods of experimentation, which is sharply abrogated as adolescence, a period of authoritarian obedience, approaches.

[582] Even the first marriage of an individual, taking place at the very beginning of adulthood (even earlier for girls), permits only a

[586 587] minimum of individual choice. Unhappy first marriages are common, and so is divorce. But after this, the fully adult man or woman can assume a freedom of choice not known since childhood. They may seek second mates, change residence, join a different "mähabär", etc., and the grip of extended family on the individual is somewhat

[585] relaxed by the short life-span of the "elder" grade. This in turn permits the middle-aged adult to be regarded and respected as an elder himself, who not only is permitted a maximum of own choice, but who can and does rule the younger grades.

551 "Metekēr" - (lit. my substitute), e. g. if the mother had lost a previous baby, especially of the same (male) sex.

"Seyum" - (lit. the one appointed to dignity), e.g. if the mother has ambitions for the boy. Common among nobles.

"Dästa" - (lit. joy).

Girls

"Almaz" - (lit. diamond)

"Mänän" - (lit. excellent, exquisite, magnificent). Common to nobles.

"Tsädal" - (lit. splendor, luster). From the Geez language.

Baptismal names, described earlier, are given by the confessor, sometimes based on the name of a deceased ancestor - especially among nobility - but are not usually used in later life unless or until the person marries by "qurban" ecclesiastical marriage, or becomes a monk or nun. Typical baptismal names are (for boys):

"Gäbrä-Mäsqal" - (lit. Servant of the Cross)

"Gäbrä-Egziabhēr"- (lit. Servant of God).

D. The long, happy nursling stage.

854 Despite the many physical ailments that endanger the life of a baby in this materially undeveloped country, the nursling stage is one in which it receives more care than at any later period.

853 The long, 2-year breastfeeding, for both boys and girls, gives them some resistance to the effects of malnutrition, vitamin shortage, diarrhea, and infections of all kinds from which older children suffer. The nursling is never out of touch with the body of the mother, or other woman or older sister. Most of the time the baby

854 is carried about on its mother's back, riding spread-legged in a half-sack. Other women and older sisters are about, eager to cuddle and handle the baby ("dällälä") to console, comfort, caress). In doing this they bend down to the baby, or pick it up, but rarely grasp it to kiss it. Fathers rarely fondle the baby until it is weaned. They often have to take a special count when asked how many teeth the baby has.

The term for nursling, "gelgäl", may be extended to animal nurslings as a compliment, but not vice versa, for this would be an insult. When the baby can sit or stand, mothers hold it by the hands and coo babytalk to it, e.g. "tatu segra" (lit. - footsie), encouraging it to take first steps, or warning it not to touch a dangerous thing, such as fire, by designating it as "kaka". The 853 baby learns to walk during the second year, long before it is weaned. Thus a baby with a nearly full set of teeth can be seen walking up to its mother, groping for the breast inside the dress or toga, pulling it out, and beginning to take nourishment while squeezing a side of the breast with the full hand. The mother will rarely push it away, until it has had its fill and lingers dreamily, and she has other work to do. In this case the mother may push the baby away gently, without sign of annoyance. Inside the hut, women are not bashful about their breasts being partly exposed during feeding, but in sight of a stranger they may cover [854] the process of the baby's taking nourishment for fear of evil-eye spirits to which every eater is vulnerable and which might dry up the milk (out of envy and meanness).

803 Toilet training begins gradually after weaning, i.e. after the age of two, when the mother has resumed full wifely duties and

803 does not wish to be dirtied all the time. Misbehaving, relapsing infants are punished by pinching.

2. The Age of Experimentation: Infancy and Childhood.

855 The years after weaning, until about the age of seven can be described as years in which the attitude of Amhara parents and society toward the small children is "laissez-faire". This is partly due to the attitude that views childhood as a state of imperfection, letting the children grow with little supervision until they are old enough to perform economic tasks, but later training them in an authoritarian fashion, to make them grow into adults as quickly as possible, without an intervening playful adolescence.

A. The Stage of Infancy.

854 Once the mother has resumed wifely duties, infants are often cared for by their older sisters, who attend to their food, carry them, fondle them, but leave them considerable freedom to roam around the outside of the huts and nearby brooks, hills, fields, etc. They are permitted to get as dirty as they like, and are dressed in a single shift of threadbare rags which conceal nothing. They are not scolded for experimentation with objects, be they animate, inanimate, or their own bodies; unless they get in the way of adults and annoy them, whereupon they are simply pushed away. They are rarely punished, for they are regarded as not having attained the "age of reason", as "not yet trainable", as "urchins" ("kutara"), lighthearted infants.

Parents do fondle them, but not as regularly as before. It

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

854 is a special occasion when father lets the infant ride on his shoulders ("ashkokke ala", lit. rode like a marmoset monkey) while going to visit another hamlet. Men do not carry children on their [165] backs, women's fashion. But parents, particularly fathers, do not take infants too seriously for an additional reason, that of infant mortality which is still high at this stage.

857 Socialization and enculturation begin through the peer-group of playmates, with whom infants have the most frequent, lengthy, and intensive contacts. They tease each other and scold each other into what they, in their playful, experimenting fashion, regard as "proper" behavior; and penalize, haze and discipline each other in the same way. From the adults they take both ideas and hand-me-down objects that have been used, worn-out and discarded, for their play activities, organize them experimentally into child-culture version of their own; for adults rarely produce a toy for children nor give them any new, unused object.

854 857 861 There is a cooperative side to this apparently random play activity, leading to the beginning of useful economic activities. Older children teach the younger ones, e.g., to make little whisk-brooms ("wof ger", lit. bird's foot) out of reeds, for which they are rewarded by their mothers with a thick, cake-like bread(similar to "dabye" of monks), which carries the same name, "wof ger". On certain church holidays, particularly "Fuha", younger children accompany older ones on their gift-begging tours.

857 867 Their powers of observation, active, free and relatively unstructured prior to later discipline, imitate, in their play activities, the social relations, including the family and sexual-social relationships of their elders. When about five years old,

754 776 [709] The actual name, "buda", is considered taboo, for it is dangerous and might attract him, when uttered aloud. Since this spirit is always male, his name is paraphrased as "the man's eye" ("yäw̃ äw̃ ayn"), "shadow eye" (ayn̈ ṭela); and a victim is paraphrased "the man's victim" ("yäw̃ äw̃ gällabi"). Even the term "smith" is used, sometimes indirectly, for further security. Thus, to accuse someone of sorcery, a security-minded Amhara says pointedly, in his presence: "As for me, I am not the son of a smith".

754 609 The first attitude toward strangers is therefore one of caution, lest he be a carrier of "buda". The suspicion is confirmed if the stranger has intelligent eyes, darting eyes, shining eyes, or if he stares curiously without saying much. It is confirmed if he seems skilled manually, for then he may be a "ṭabib" (lit. trained person, technologically wise), hiding the fact that he was born into the ironsmith caste. It is less disturbing if he openly reveals himself as an ironsmith, for then he lives segregated in a hamlet of his own ethnic group, and when contact must be established for trade (purchase of iron tools and pottery), certain "precautions" against being struck by the evil eye can be taken; extra-vulnerable persons such as pregnant women can be kept from contact; and all transactions will be carried on in full daylight.

754 TR [609] The "buda" is regarded as preferring to strike and feast on women, especially beautiful ones, and to feed, cannibal-style, on fat, beautiful children. The stranger therefore should never praise the health or beauty of children, or of women, out loud. Mothers hide their children at the approach of a stranger. Nice new garments on a child also attract the buda, and this is one reason why children under 5, when infant mortality is highest, are given only rags to wear, and are permitted to be dirty most of the time.

[854 164]

854 Until weaning, at the
853 age of two, the child is never removed from contact with the body
of the mother or other female relative caring for him. After
857 weaning, childhood is an age of roaming over the countryside during
the long dry season and of performing such useful tasks as pro-
tecting the harvest by shooting pebbles from slingshots at birds
and baboons.

855 The pattern of punishment is dominated by spontaneity, during
childhood as well as adolescence. A suddenly enraged parent
(father or male elder) may hurl a firebrand at a child, or cuff him
roughly about the head and shoulders for as long as the rage lasts.
Sometimes real injury results, but there is no planned, coldly cal-
culated punishment, and the anger is usually quickly forgotten. The
youngster is never left in doubt when he has transgressed. Retrib-
ution comes within a split second. Parents do not hesitate to
exercise their authority and to impose their wills, when angered.
The youngster soon has a clear conception of what kind of behavior
it would be wise to avoid. Thus the youngster is presented, gradually,
with a set of values which early become rooted in his personality,
and help him to remain, later in life, in tune with his social group
and culture pattern.

554 Individuals who chafe at the status quo, notably women and/or
562 individuals of either sex who have a talent and urge for individual
enterprise, often find their way into the "zar" cult. Cultural
participation of the female is so restricted during her life cycle,
that many emotional outlets are denied her. Monotonous daily routines
of manual labor; two years of breastfeeding after every birth; denial
of active participation in the church; derogatory views of female
intelligence on the part of the males; etc., limit the Amhara women

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

the morning and what remains to be done. The peasant may retire for a nap, and perhaps to lie with his wife, before taking up the afternoon's work. He returns for about three more hours of plowing after his noon rest. The afternoon sun burns down on him; the plow is harder to wield; he plods on. At home the women continue their work, no sooner finishing one task than they attend to another. The mother puts the child who rides on her back to the breast whenever it cries.

The shepherds do not come home for lunch. They have taken some *ǐnjarā* or *dābo* ("whole wheat bread") along with them. In harvest months they enjoy a special treat, roasting grains or pulse which they have snatched from somebody's field. Though their responsibility is great—a boy will be whipped if an animal in his charge gets hurt or lost or if it gets into fields of grain—their work is light. They spend the day running idly, practicing war chants, playing at various adult activities. Their mood is as free as the great spaces about them. As the day grows hotter they are likely to discard their sheepskin covering and move about naked. Toward dusk, the shepherds' spirits quicken. Their songs become more excited; lively melodies are heard from their wooden flutes. It is time to go home to family, supper, and fire.

When father and sons enter after the day's work, they start munching on roasted grains, *ǐnjarā*, or *dābo*. They may drink some *ṭallā* and relax. It begins to get chilly. The room is dark and smoky, the fleas bite them—but it is the easiest time of the day. The family is together, and everyone enjoys talking and hearing about the homely events of the day. A few hours after dark, supper is served. Parents and older children eat together out of a common basket. Younger children and servants stand respectfully, awaiting their turn, grateful if someone places a large bite of food in their mouths.

After dinner there is a great washing of feet—the father's by his wife or children, the others' by themselves. The peasant recites or reads his evening prayers and lies down on his bed made of strips of cowhide. The children settle for the night on the clay benches. Last of all, the mother covers the embers with ashes, sets out the grain she must grind before dawn, and places her weary body next to that of her husband's.

This grueling schedule is not repeated every day. On nearly half the days in each month heavy labor is not permitted—men may not plow or harvest, women may not grind or spin. These are holy days: Saturdays and Sundays (both of which are honored as the Sabbath in Abyssinia) and the monthly and annual commemorations of the saints.

The woman's schedule on such days is only lightened, not radically altered. Food and drink must still be prepared and served. Except for a possible trip to church with her husband Sunday morning before breakfast, a woman's hours are still confined to the home compound and its obligations. The shepherds must still take care of their herds, though some boys may get together for

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

but also various categories of Amhara discriminated on the basis of sex, age, and social position. 186

Although Amhara women enjoy considerable property and inheritance rights, their generally depressed status reflects the low opinion commonly held of them. The peasant woman's lot is as hard as that of a slave. In the wealthier families, where domestic drudgery is relieved by servants, she must still be a passive, reserved nonentity. Women are beaten as a matter of course for mistakes in their work or apparent flirtations with other men. As the proverb says: "Women and donkeys need the stick." "Woman's work" is referred to derisively by men; "woman's language" is the epithet for vulgar and trivial talk. 562 [565]* [539]

A common justification for keeping women at home nearly all the time is that if they are allowed to go outside they will stir up all manner of trouble, for by nature they are gossipers and deceivers. Another proverb tells us: "Mules and women will betray you." In a number of legends, including those connected with the saintly figures of Eṣhē Yohānnes and Takla Hāymānot, women have been turned to stone because of their vile tongues and treacherous ways. Menstruation is viewed as the punishment incurred by womankind as a result of that first great treachery in Eden. [539] [841]

Children are considered inferior because they are governed by ignorance and passion. Toward infants the Amhara is lenient. Because "infants and cattle are the same," tiny children are not expected to perform reasonably. After two or three years, during which time the child has been indulged copiously by the father as well as the mother, his status begins to drop. He comes to be looked on as a servant. By about six years he has passed the first "age of reason," but he is wise enough only to stay away from fire, the edges of cliffs, and prickly plants. For most of his actions he must be given orders. 858 [864]

As the child grows older he is supposed to be dominated in turn by each of the four elements. The adolescent is likened to air: flighty, never settled. The young man is like fire: hot in picking quarrels as he is hot chasing after women, and altogether not worth very much. Only as a man approaches forty does he begin to gain respectability. He becomes cool, like water. This is a time when he minds his own business, does his work properly, and is not so prone to go about insulting others. This is the advent of the real age of reason, when a person arrives at an understanding of what is right and wrong in life. Most esteemed of all is the elder, the man of sixty or seventy. Like earth, he is settled and stable. He is sober, wise, indifferent to insults, pious, and ready to mediate rather than take part in quarrels. Children soon learn that older folk, not themselves, are the hope of the earth. This lesson was conveyed by the little boy who, when asked what he wanted to become when he grew up, replied: "I want to become an elder." 882 885 888 [867]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

ing support this permissiveness. If a baby is not suckled whenever he wishes to be, it is believed that he will become sick or will not grow strong, and the negligent mother is looked on as one of evil character.

Not only is the infant's desire to suck freely indulged, but it is indulged for a fairly long time. The normal period for breast-feeding is two to three years. Only if a new sibling happens on the scene is weaning deliberately effected. If another child is not forthcoming, and the mother is not ill, there is no inclination at any time to deny the child the breast. In many cases nursing continues until the child is four or five, when his work obligations begin to interfere.

The attitude of oral permissiveness is manifest in other ways. Thumb-sucking is accepted with good humor, and when a baby is in a bad mood he may be given his father's or mother's thumb to use as a pacifier. Though Amhara are otherwise very modest, mothers do not hesitate to offer the breast no matter where they happen to be. When referring to the process of breast-feeding, Amhara males invariably cup one hand under an imaginary breast to depict this common and natural event. When speaking to persuade a guest to accept a second glass of beer, the Amhara host has recourse to the formula: "But your mother's breasts are two!" Another indication that breast-feeding is a very familiar part of the Amhara's social environment is that in interpreting the TAT cards, a number of respondents interpreted some scene with children as a situation of breast-feeding, although this was not depicted on any of the cards.

The emotional context of breast-feeding is more significant than the physical pleasures involved. Until he leaves the breast the Amhara child inhabits an emotional paradise. He receives much attention and is fondled by both parents and by other relatives. He remains close to his mother at all times, sleeping alongside her at night and spending the day near her when not tied in a bundle on her back. He accompanies her thus to visit relatives, attend market, or go to church. Only when the mother goes to fetch water is he separated from her, for there is not room for both baby and water jug on the mother's back, and besides, water holes are the abodes of evil spirits who may try to make the child sick.

After he is weaned, the Amhara child enters a much harsher emotional atmosphere. He must adjust to a regime of commands, responsibilities, and punishments. He is nostalgic forever after for the warmth and security of his earliest years, a condition vividly associated with the experience of sucking at the breast. The prominence in Amhara culture of this association of emotional security with breast-feeding is shown by such phenomena as the mammary symbolism of the rooftop and the institution known as the "breast-father." The former consists of a clay ornament, whose color and shape clearly replicate the female nipple, which is placed atop the breast-like conical roof which

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Amhara society as marked by a moderately high degree of independence. This is to say that Amhara society gives relatively wide rein to individual impulse in action. It is not to say that Amhara culture places a high value on the moral worth of the individual personality. That is a separate question, which we shall now proceed to explore.

INDIVIDUALITY VERSUS CONFORMITY AND ANONYMITY

The extent to which individual personality is valued in a society is reflected primarily in two aspects of its culture. One of these comprises its processes of education, in the broadest sense of the term; the other, its forms of art. The character of these aspects of culture reveal, respectively, the degree of concern for the *development* of an individualized self and the degree of concern for the *expression* of an individualized self.

Education and Socialization

Obedience and politeness are the overriding goals in bringing up children among the Amhara. After a prolonged and indulged infancy, the Amhara child from about three years on is subjected to a regime of discipline and repression. He is taught to fulfill without question any request made by any older person. He is conditioned to stand quietly whenever guests are present and to stand facing the wall while his parents or guests eat their dinner. If addressed by elders, especially those outside his immediate family, he is expected to reply in a barely audible whisper—a norm that is sometimes adhered to with such pathetic faithfulness that it has become the object of gentle satire in a short story by the young Ethiopian writer, Tadesse Liban.[36] Children who are noisy and disrespectful are referred to contemptuously by the term *bälagë*, meaning "rude."

The desires and interests of an Amhara child are not taken into account by those who raise him. He is provided with a bare minimum of clothes, and little effort is expended in procuring him playthings,[37] although in some families little dolls made of rags (*ashängulit*) are produced. Children have a rich play-life with their peers, but this consists mostly in imitating various adult activities. Organized games occur very rarely, the chief one—*gannä*—being played as a rule but once a year, on Christmas Day.[38] The traditional songs and dances are learned from other children while tending the herds, but children are not encouraged to perform them in front of adults. The opinions of children are never expressed, let alone consulted. Indeed, in some commoners' families the children are treated little better than the farm animals, if that well. One occasionally sees a peasant woman or servant directing her child to perform some chore by throwing clods of dirt or manure at him